

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EINV, NI

SUBJECT: AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY

REF: LAGOS 6417

1. WE HAD OCCASION AT SOCIAL EVENT JULY 12 TO DISCUSS WITH ADEKUOYE, HEAD OF MEA'S ECONOMIC DEPARTMENT QUESTION OF AIIC. HE SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN PREVENTED BY PRESS OF OTHER BUSINESS FROM ATTENDING DIRECTLY TO CASE BUT HAD DESIGNATED ONE OF HIS ASSISTANTS TO EXAMINE MINISTRY OF TRADE FILE.

2. ASKED IF ADDITIONAL DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS WOULD BE HELPFUL ADEKUOYE SAID FMG WELL AWARE OF USG INTEREST AND FURTHER REPRESENTATIONS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE RESENTED. AIIC WOULD BE BETTER OFF TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS. HE ADDED THAT THERE WAS LITTLE SYMPATHY AMONG CIVIL SERVANTS FOR AIIC POSITION BUT "COMMANDER IN CHIEF" I.E. GENERAL GOWON, USUALLY WILLING AND INDEED SOMETIMES OVERLY WILLING TO SEEK COMPROMISES. HOWEVER GOWON ALSO HAD STRONG AVERSION FOR ANYTHING RESEMBLING "BLACKMAIL."

3. ASKED IF HE WAS IMPLYING THAT "COMMANDER IN CHIEF" LIKELY TO DEAL WITH THIS MATTER HIMSELF, ADEKUOYE SAID CASE WOULD WORK ITS WAY THROUGH MINISTRIES TO CABINET OFFICE AND IT WAS RESPONSIBILITY OF CABINET OFFICE TO BRING PROBLEM SITUATIONS TO GENERAL'S ATTENTION. HE NOTED THAT NEW SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC

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AFFAIRS IN CABINET OFFICE HAD BEEN EDUCATED IN U.S. AND

SUGGESTED HE MIGHT BE USEFUL PERSON FOR AIIC TO CULTIVATE.

4. COMMENT: SOCIAL EVENT WAS IMPROMPTU SATURDAY LUNCH WITH ECON COUNSELOR AND COMMERCIAL ATTACHE AND ADEJUOYE WAS SPEAKING ON PERSONAL AND OFF THE RECORD BASIS. IT WOULD BE MOST EMBARRASSING FOR US AND HIM IF HIS VIEWS WERE CONVEYED TO AIIC. HOWEVER, HIS OBSERVATIONS REINFORCE SUGGESTION WE ADVANCED IN REFTEL TO EFFECT THAT USG COULD USEFULLY REST ON ITS OARS FOR A WHILE AND INVITE AIIC TO TAKE UP THE STROKE. WE RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT CONVEY THAT SUGGESTION TO AIIC, IF IT HAS NOT ALREADY DONE SO.

5. IN RESPONSE TO ADEKUOYE'S REFERENCE TO BALCKMAIL, WE NEEDLED HIM LIGHTLY ABOUT OCCUPATION OF MOLONEY STREET GROUNDS. HE OBSERVED THAT WITH DEPARTURE OF FORMER COMMISSIONERS AT END DECEMBER 1974 "BALANCE OF POWER WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT HAD GHANGED." WITH CERTAIN EXCEPTIONS CIVIL SERVICE PERMANENT SECRETARIES WERE NO LONGER ALL POWERFUL AS MOST OF THEM HAD BEEN. BALANCE HAD SHIFTED TO COMMISSIONERS AND BECAUSE MORE COMMISSIONERS NOW MILITARY OFFICERS TO THE MILITARY. IN OFFICE, THOSE COMMISSIONERS BEHAVED LIKE THE MILITARY MEN THEY WERE. THEY WANTED TO TAKE CHARGE AND TO ACT, AND UNDER SYSTEM OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY THAT OBTAINED IN NIGERIA, THEY HAD CONSIDERABLE SCOPE FOR ACTION. ADEKUOYE ADDED THAT SO FAR AS HE KNEW COMMISSIONER (AND BRIGADIER) OBASANJO HAD ACTED IN MOLONEY ST. AFFAIR WITHOUT CLEARING WITH MEA OR FOR THAT MATTER ANYONE ELSE. OBASANJO HAD MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CARRYING OUT FMG'S DECISION TO ACQUIRE THE BUILDING AND HE HAD GONE ABOUT IT IN HIS OWN WAY.
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